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RUEH AR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 2358
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000932

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B. WALCH
DRL FOR N. WILETT
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/17/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: ZANU-PF--MDC NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE

REF: A. HARARE 915
[1](#)B. HARARE 895
[1](#)C. HARARE 889

Classified By: CDA Katherine Dhanani for reason 1.4 (d)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Talks between ZANU-PF and the MDC aimed at resolving outstanding issues from the September 15 agreement, principally the allocation of ministries, came to an impasse late Thursday evening. While discussions, mediated by former South African president Thabo Mbeki, initially focused on two ministries--finance and home affairs--the MDC has insisted on an "equitable" distribution of ministries. This would entail negotiations on ministries across the board. The parties are scheduled to meet once again on Friday. If ZANU-PF, as expected, does not agree to a broader discussion, the MDC intends to argue to the AU and SADC that a power-sharing agreement is unworkable and that there should be new, internationally supervised, elections. END SUMMARY.

Setting the Stage

[1](#)2. (C) MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai signed the Septmeber 15 power-sharing agreement against the advice of advisors who believed that the agreement left unsettled major issues, particularly the distribution of ministries between ZANU-PF and the MDC. Tsvangirai and Mugabe had tentatively agreed on an allocation between the two parties, although no agreement was reached on the important ministries of finance, home affairs, local government, and foreign affairs. Tsvangirai intimated that the deal could be concluded if ZANU-PF ceded control of finance and home affairs to the MDC (Ref C), but others in his party, including negotiator Tendai Biti, were pushing for more (Ref A).

13. (C) At the same time, Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe was facing resistance to the September 15 agreement from hardliners in his own party (Ref B). In an apparent salve to them, and in anticipation of Mbeki's mediation this week, Mugabe on October 10 had officially published an allocation of ministries that would give the four outstanding ministries to ZANU-PF (although Mugabe at the time stated publicly that no decision had been made on finance).

14. (C) MDC officials this as a provocation and a demonstration of bad faith. Biti told us before Mbeki's most recent mediation effort began on October 13, that he believed ZANU-PF's action in publishing the list represented an opportunity to reopen the entire subject of allocation of ministries and to focus on a equitable distribution that went beyond finance and home affairs.

This Week's Mediation

15. (C) The first three days of talks this week, according to MDC contacts, focused on the finance and home affairs ministries. Mugabe agreed to give finance to the MDC and then agreed to a proposal put forward by MDC-Mutambara leader Arthur Mutambara that leadership of home affairs be shared by ZANU-PF and the MDC on a six-month rotating basis. ZANU-PF apparently thought this would satisfy MDC-Tsvangirai, and the government newspaper The Herald reported that a deal was near. On Thursday, Tsvangirai rejected the proposal on home

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affairs, and told Mugabe and Mbeki that he wanted a discussion on all ministries in order to arrive at an "equitable" distribution. In other words, if ZANU-PF received defense, MDC should have home affairs (police). If ZANU-PF had justice, MDC should have local government or information. And so on.

16. (C) ZANU-PF was reportedly surprised by the the MDC's attempt to expand the discussion. It believes that the MDC is continuing to change the goal posts and this has strengthened the position of hardliners who are opposed to an agreement.

Next Steps

17. (C) The parties are scheduled to meet again today, Friday. Biti told us this morning he sees little hope of an agreement, and that a meeting today will serve only to demonstrate that negotiations have irrevocably failed. He said the MDC will then make the case to the AU and SADC that further negotiations would be futile, and that there should be new, internationally supervised elections.

COMMENT

18. (C) We don't rule out the possibility that there could yet be an agreement based upon the MDC taking control of both the finance and home affairs ministries. In the past couple of weeks both Mugabe and Tsvangirai have given indications that this would be acceptable to them. But both face recalcitrant hardliners within their parties: Mugabe from insiders who stand to lose patronage spoils and who could face investigation and prosecution if the MDC heads these ministries; and Tsvangirai from advisors such as Biti who are deeply suspicious of ZANU-PF and want a more equitable agreement. It is particularly significant that Tsvangirai, who signed the September 15 agreement against the wishes of his national council, now appears to be working closely with Biti and unwilling to compromise without MDC consensus.

